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PROFESSIONAL CARDS.

ATTORNEYS.

S. A. Osborn, Attorney at Law, Office with W. T. Rogers, Brownville, Neb. T. L. Schick, Attorney at Law, Office with W. T. Rogers, Brownville, Neb. J. S. Stull, Attorney and Counselor at Law, Office over H. W. Thomas', Brownville, Neb. J. H. Broady, Attorney and Counselor at Law, Office over State Bank, Brownville, Neb. E. W. Thomas, Attorney at Law, Office, front room over Brownville Hardware Store, Brownville, Neb. W. T. Rogers, Attorney and Counselor at Law, Office, rear room over H. W. Thomas', Brownville, Neb. H. L. Matthews, Physician and Surgeon, Office in City Drug Store, No. 22 Main Street, Brownville, Neb.

PHYSICIANS.

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LETTER HEADS, BILL HEADS. Keely printed and set in office.

THE WENTWORTH MYSTERY, OR—Who Will Save Her?

CHAPTER XII. FRIENDS IN COUNCIL.

'I have said it and I'll repeat it. Gertrude is my sister; and though, for the matter of that, she hasn't behaved much like one, I won't see harm done to her!'

The speaker, Philip Wentworth, is seated on the edge of a table of black oak, whose surface is so polished by time and friction, that it reflects, like a mirror, the objects placed upon it—those objects, at the present moment, being bottles and glasses. He is smoking, as usual, but is very pale, and his manner betrays an agitation altogether unlike his customary half-natural, half-assumed indifference. The room, which is the sitting-room of the lodge, has three other occupants. Darknoll, the lodge proprietor. Malyn, the physician of eminence from London. Rockwood, the thieves' attorney and prosperous gentleman. Darknoll is seated nearest to Philip, his body bent forward, his hands upon his knees, his sharp, bead-like eyes fixed upon the young man's face.

Malyn has placed himself modestly at the extreme end of the table, and having secured one of the decanters to himself, is busily investigating and diminishing its contents. Rockwood alone is not seated, walking to and fro with his usual restlessness of movement, like a panther in a cage. 'Philip!—It is the old lodge-keeper who is now speaking, in a voice so gentle and caressing that it might pass for a woman's!—Philip, you have no reason to doubt the devotion of any one here. You cannot doubt my love.'

'Oh, bother your love!' was the ungracious reply. 'I suppose you like me well enough. We've known each other for such a precious long time. Can old acquaintance be forgot? and all that kind of thing. As for Mat Rockwood's devotion, I'm pretty well up to that. He is devoted to his own interests, that's what he is!'

'Just so,' assented the lawyer, with a contemptuous nod, as he continued to walk the room. 'For the doctor,'—and Philip jerked his thumb over his shoulder in Malyn's direction—'he's devoted to the bottle.'

'You're right there, my young friend,' was the doctor's tranquil reply; 'and never was devotion more generously responded to. They are things of no spirit, their blood is asleep, that when it is offered them, do not drink deep.' Good advice, and Ben Jonson's. This is capital port, Mr. Darknoll!'

'It is a rare wine,' said the old man, turning half round, but his eyes ever wandering towards Philip. 'My father laid down many dozen of it in one of the vacant crypts of the church vaults; to ripen, like the bodies around, into a more generous life among the dust and the cobwebs. Bonorum was the motto he placed above them.'

'And,' said the doctor, tossing down a bumper, 'a very good motto, so long as I have the felicity to be one of the resurrection angels. If fate, he went on, refilling his glass, and admiring its rich red hue and straw-like light against the globe of the lamp that was standing on the table,—if fate had inconvenienced me with the burden of riches, the first thing I should do would be to lay down a good cellar of wines.'

'What for,' asked the lodge-keeper, 'except to repeat the old folly of heaping up riches for others to enjoy? Near the Wentworth cellars the Wentworths themselves are buried, and it has often struck me how it must torment the souls of some of those hard-drinking, pleasure-loving men, for their bodies to lie stiff and stark in their coffins, unable to turn either to the right or the left, while the glorious juice they loved so much is ripening in the darkness by their side.'

'From which I draw this sage conclusion, Mr. Darknoll: that the truest wisdom in life is to enjoy the present,—here he emptied his glass—and let the future look after itself!'

'Ah!' said the old man, with a half-sigh. 'You'll pardon me if I say that you never belonged to—or, rather, you never were—the head of a great family, Dr. Malyn. It is a wonder to what heights these owners of great names will soar, and to what depths they will sink, to live up their pyramid of pride, and lie again in the grandeur of their children.'

fool doctor's calm reply. 'I would not answer for his life over to-morrow.'

Dreadful news, surely, for a son to hear. It produced, however, no visible effect upon Philip, who, swinging his legs about, continued smoking. 'And if the news you bring should prove true,'—Rockwood turned to Darknoll,—'and Sir Hugh has made a will what then?'

'I mentioned the nurse's suspicions, not mine.' 'When Mrs. Prudence suspects, you may write in your memorandum-book the word "certainty," said the doctor, sotto voce. 'You are a lawyer, Matthew,' and the lodge-keeper addressed his son-in-law. 'You must know best!'

'He must be a far slier lawyer than I am to discuss the contents of a document he has not seen.' 'A clever man can always speculate—none better than yourself, Mathew. A will made—' 'Would be in favor of Gertrude,' answered Rockwood, without waiting for the conclusion of the question; 'and my young friend here left out in the cold.'

'I'm not the only one who would freeze then, Mat?' put in Mr. Philip, with a malicious grin. 'There's a certain somebody who holds a paper of mine which, if not liquidated when due—'

'Will put you in prison in less than twenty-four hours,' was the stern reply. 'I am a man of business, and mean business. You are a butterfly; but your modern butterfly, to exist, must have wings of bank-paper, or down he comes to the earth, without—and Mr. Rockwood playfully rattled the cash in his pockets—'even a lodging in Grub Street.'

'You don't mean—and Philip rose angrily from his seat at the table. 'I mean,—and the lawyer confronted him with a visage hard as granite. 'I mean you to do my bidding—obey my orders. Do you hear, Mr. Philip? Do you think I've any thought of you in this matter? Pull my chestnuts from the fire, and it shall be my care your paws are not burnt in the process; but—and withdrawing his right hand from his pocket, he struck it fiercely down on the table making the bottles and glasses dance and ring again—'fall to do this, and—glancing at Darknoll, who was nervously wringing his hands—'unless others take you up, I will put all the power I possess in force, and pass you as a shambling, shuffling vagabond, in the streets of London, yet never lose you a sixpence with which to buy oblivion.'

'Mathew! Mathew!'

'I know what you would say, Mr. Darknoll; but you forget there are no ties of blood between this young gentleman and myself. Not that, if there were, it would make much difference. As a man of business, I mean everything as business. The only bond I choose to recognize is a legal one, duly witnessed; and the only tie, red tape. This girl—this one obstacle between ourselves and fortune, must disappear!'

'This declaration took no one by surprise but Philip. He started from one to the other, aghast; then said: 'I don't know what he means; but I'll stick to what I've said—I will, by Jove! And, mind you, Daddy Darknoll, I'll hold you responsible if any harm comes to Gertrude!'

'No harm shall come to her,' replied the old man, soothing the fright and anger of Philip with his musical voice. 'We have arranged all that. You are your father's heir.'

'Well, yes; at least, I ought to be.' 'You shall be; but you must be guided by us.'

His silly swagger, however again forsook him, and his better nature once more, and for the last time, endeavored to assert itself.

'But what necessity is there for what you call Gertrude's disappearing? Better half a cake than none. Can't we share?'

'Share!' thundered the lawyer. 'Upon what right will you ground your claim? Do you want it to be proclaimed to the world who and what you are?'

'A solemn silence followed Rockwood's words. The unhappy Philip covered his face with his hands. It was Darknoll who first broke the silence with his smooth silvery voice. 'We have decided, in your interest, that Gertrude Wentworth shall disappear.'

'You don't mean by death?'

'Who shall describe with what a coward's white and haggard face Philip looked up? 'No, no, no! A seeming death, that is all! To live elsewhere, well cared for—excellently well cared for; but not again to revisit the Wentworth estate.'

'A grim sense of what was intended began to enter upon Philip's mind, but the look of horror was still upon his face. 'You swear her life shall be safe?'

'We solemnly swear that.' 'Then how prevent her return?'

'It shall be prevented.'

'What! Do you mean to say that Gertrude is to vanish away utterly?'

'Utterly!'

'And no inquiries to be made?'

'No inquiries to be made.'

'Oh, come, that's a trick above even you, Mat Rockwood!'

'No inquiries will be made—no inquiries can be made!' said old Darknoll, his hand on Philip's knee, his voice reduced to a whisper. 'Cases have been known where persons in a trance—'

'In a trance,' the old man went on, 'have been spirited away, to awaken to a new life in some far distant place.'

'A sort of Arabian Nights' business, you mean, Daddy; but that cock won't fight now-a-days,' said Philip, whose selfish nature was rapidly recovering its equanimity. 'Your gentility who try on that kind of a game will precious soon find themselves in stone jugs, as 't'other ones were shut up in stone bottles.'

'The gentility will be found, nevertheless. And I shall see the dream of my life realized, and you,' his voice was now so low that it only reached Philip's ear, 'my grandson—the lord of the Wentworth estates!'

'But you don't mean you are going to bury Gertrude alive?' asked Philip, the horrified look again coming to his face.

'Why not, since we are sure of her re-awakening?'

'Weak as he was vicious, the young man turned sullenly away, his head bent, his hands drooping forward listlessly between his knees. Darknoll rose and approached the two other conspirators, who were standing in a far corner of the room. 'Leave him to me,' he whispered. 'I know him—none better—none so well. It is but a question of time, and the rest will follow.'

'And our visit to the old church vaults?' asked Doctor Malyn, who having finished his decanter of port, appeared for the first time to take an interest in what was going forward. 'To-night, at twelve.'

'Midnight! Quite the sensational hour! Does our young friend accompany us?' indicated Philip.

'No.'

'Quite right. Are you bound for the village, Rockwood?'

'I have an appointment with Mrs. Prudence, at the Abbey.'

'They passed out of the lodge, and stood beneath the ivy-covered porch. 'Shall I give you a light?'

'Thank you!'

'Malyn leaned forward till the end of his unlighted cigar touched the fiery tip of the one that Rockwood held between his lips. 'Safe investment, eh?'

'Splendid!'

'Good idea, that of Darknoll's; none but an old fellow who had bug about church-vaults all his life could have hit upon it. Its working out rests with you, doctor.'

'With me and Mrs. Prudence. That is an invaluable woman—very.'

'A flame rose up from the ignited cigars, and for a moment illumined their faces. Both were as calm and collected as though their respective owners were bent upon errands of charity and goodwill.'

'At twelve—here.'

'A twelve. Take care of yourself, Malyn. Darknoll's port wine is powerful in its effects.'

'Bah!—there's not a headache in a hoghead of such glorious stuff. Au revoir!'

come stumbling among the grass-grown graves, which everywhere surrounded the old Abbey Church.

Some half a mile from the stately Abbey itself, this magnificent ruin, for it is fast becoming one, stands half-hidden by branching yews, some of which report affirms to be more than a thousand years old, yet, tho' hollow and decaying, they continue to vegetate with a marvellous vigor, throwing out branch after branch, as loth, after so many long years of watching, to altogether withdraw their pall-like shadow from the sleeping dead.

Rising above the dark enclosure is the great church tower, with double buttresses at its angles, ending, tho' not seen in such a night as this, in a richly embattled parapet, adorned with pinnacles, all fast crumbling in ruin.

The later Wentworths, who cared little for anything but a thoroughbred horse and hound, had spent little or no money upon the ancient edifice; and though the present rector, idle, good-hearted Frank Midway, had caused some restorations to be made, they were but few. He was no antiquarian, and cared more to see the silvery flash of a trout at the end of his well managed line, than for all the artistic marvels that stone and brass could offer.

Very ancient, and, to the artist's eyes, very picturesque, is the old Abbey Church; the exterior of the original building, a mixture of Norman and early English, peering through its veil of ivy, which—this was the rector's doing—was not left so thick as to conceal all its beauties.

That marvellous improver of much in architecture that would otherwise be harsh and cold, old Father Time, had placed his mellowing hand every where, rounding angles, breaking lines, and softening, even while destroying.

In the great porch old Benjamin Darknoll is seated, a lantern by his side, on one of the two stone benches so much affected by village gossips, male as well as female, on a Sunday. Seen in the dim light of the lantern, there is a something weird in the old lodge-keeper's bent form, white hair, and gleaming eyes; and and so the doctor thinks, and whispers as much to the lawyer.

'Queer card, your venerable father-in-law, Mat, as we see him now. In that Rembrandtish light and shadow, he looks like some old monk, who might have been present at this church's building.'

'Curse the church!' is Rockwood's emphatic and somewhat blasphemous reply, as he draws his wrappers closer around him. 'The damp and chill strikes to one's marrow. I never entered one yet that I didn't get a cold in the head that lasted me a fortnight.'

As Darknoll rises, they both greet him with inquiries about Philip. The old man answers that he has persuaded him to go to bed.

'The poor boy has had a great shock, and is shattered for the present in body and mind.'

'You know Philip,' sneers Rockwood. 'Surely I do.'

'Lucky for you, Joe, that we live in more civilized times,' puts in Rockwood, 'or we might see that sky-blue integument of yours serving as a Sunday suit to—'

'Stow it, Mr. Rockwood!—please, stow it! I ain't up to chaff on such subjects; I ain't, indeed. Not but what, if such was the law now as you say was set down by our ancestors, there's a precious many as is marbled up inside places like this as would find themselves stretched outside here in the h'open air along wif the werry papers, and sick like.'

Darknoll, who has produced a bunch of keys, opens the door. A huge lock, but well oiled, as are the hinges upon which the grizzly mementos of the long-defunct pirate rolls back noiselessly.

'Is it necessary to enter the church?' asks Rockwood, as he stands gazing into the dark interior from where the lights they carry are already conjuring up a myriad of dancing shadows.

'Yes; I have only the key to the private entrance to the vaults, the sexton being home.'

The four men enter. The doctor, who immediately impregnates the sacred edifice with a strong aroma of rum-and-water, gazes around him curiously; Rockwood walks on, indifferent to everything but the business that brought them there; while Powder Blue, his feelings still shocked by the robber's skin on the door, wears the look of one both injured and discouraged.

Curious that this ruffian, to whom the darkest night and most villainous neighborhoods of London has no terrors; whose brutal nature, bulldog-like, careless of odds, seeks the quarrel and courts the fray, feels a cold perspiration bursting out from his forehead and hands, as the lights they carry quiver hither and thither among the stone figures on the tombs, and painted saints upon the windows and walls.

Here, a Crusader, with crossed legs and half obliterated face, caught the light for a moment, glared out upon them with his history eyes, and was gone. There, a carved oak dragon, rampant on a pew, with embazoned shield and projecting, painted tongue, stood out at his very elbow, and caused Mr. Bradley to start as from a suddenly disturbed snake.

The interior of this old, exceeding old, church, was very beautiful, consisting of nave, side aisles, and chancels, massive pillars, rich with sculptured adornments, dividing the nave from the aisles, while tall and shadowy oak stalls, covered with the most grotesque of carvings, increased the gloomy, solemn effect; and as the shuffling feet of Powder Blue clattered over one of the many brasses, that ruffian's heart turned to water—the thing, as he would have himself expressed, 'being altogether out of his line.'

'All Wentworths,' said Darknoll, addressing the doctor, and waving his hand towards the recumbent figures around. 'A branch—the younger one—of the cruel Stafford's family; cruel, ever cruel, and proud. Ha!—and he waved his lantern, waking up many a pale, still face with vanishing gleams of light—'there's a many here that must find their marble pillows more easy lying on than they did their feather ones! Temple of truth!—and the lodge-keeper chuckled, 'temple of lies, if we read aright the tombs and the brasses.'

He passed before a low-browed arch, a deep recess, out in the thickness of the wall. Without being concealed, it was partially hidden behind a huge stone front, in which generation after generation of the Wentworths had been obtruded.

'The father stood by while Philip was christened; it was he who gave the name,' whispered Darknoll into the ear of his son-in-law; 'and what was so solemnly done then shall not be undone now.'

'You'll have to look sharp about it, Daddy; a thousand such christenings wouldn't suffice to make Philip heir to the Wentworth estates.'

'No one else shall inherit them,' said the old man through his clenched teeth—that is to say, through the few that remained to him.

He inserted a key from the bunch he carried, pushed open the door as he spoke, and a rush of damp, earthy air came out into the church, already chill enough in all conscience. So great was the rush, so sudden and so cold, that but the lights they carried were protected, they would inevitably have been extinguished.

A flight of crumbling steps, a long passage, and the four men are standing in the vaults beneath the church. A vast and awful place it was this dismal subterranean abode of death. The flooring of the great church, supported by circular, groined arches, seemed, though higher than a tall man's touch, to weigh down upon the head and oppress the brain.

'Is this where you keep your wine, Mr. Darknoll?' asked the doctor, with a laugh, though unable to repress a shiver.

The old man pointed a lean finger to one out of the many crypts in the labyrinth of walls, a crypt carefully boarded in.

'There they rest, as they have rested for this half century—sunshine, bottled up in the deepest darkness. I shall put a cork over to the whole lot when Philip becomes Sir Philip. I will not stint a glass.'

'Mark me down among your guests, said the doctor. 'You give me a dou-

ble interest in the approaching event. But what are we treading on that seems to crumble away so beneath the feet?'

'Bones,'

'Oh, indeed!'

There was no astonishing the doctor, but the more delicate nature of Powder Blue was much revolted, and he raised his feet gingerly up and down, like a bear that is learning to dance on hot plates.

'Bones—layers of bones, four feet deep. Bones are built everywhere into the walls—faces. This church is built over, or on, one of those vast tumuli which marked the fierceness of the struggle between the Saxon and the Dane, and received, without distinction, the bones of each.'

'What's that?' and Powder Blue gave a great start.

'A rat.'

No, no. There were rats in plenty, chasing each other in and out of the crypts, or sitting on the coffins, ghastly things dropping from hole and wall, and watching the visitors with fearless, gleaming eyes; but rats had no terrors for Mr. Bradley. Rats! why the houses in the London Warren were honey-combed by rats. They held jubilee in its aisles and courts, and glided before the nocturnal passenger as he walked, swift, gray, and ghostlike. No; it was not a rat that Mr. Bradley meant, but 'That—that' and he pointed to a hideous, vampyre thing, clinging, with outstretched wings, to a great leaden coffin—a sort of horrible figure-entombment.

'Oh, the bat! Bats grow to a great size down here,' said the lodge-keeper. 'The vapours nourish them. The coffin that you're clinging so fondly to contains an abbot—a jovial, mad cap abbot, in those good old times before the eighth Henry turned the monks adrift. They say that Abbot Everard—he was a Wentworth, too—had sold himself to the Evil One; and I sometimes fancy that these horrible creatures,' pointing to the bat, 'are here to watch over their master's bargain.'

'You seem in a cheerful humor to-night, Daddy,' said Rockwood, unable to repress a shudder. 'But bats are not business—not our business, at any rate, for the present. Where is this girl's coffin that you spoke about?'

'Not here,' said the old man, quickly and disingenuously—'not here. None but great folks lie here.'

He pushed on till, after passing through several other grim passages, he stopped before a number of stone shelves, upon which some coffins, covered with plain black cloth, and studded with plain black nails, had been newly placed.

'Take down that one!' he said, holding up his lantern, and indicating the newest-looking, and place it here upon this pile of earth. Do you believe in ghosts, doctor?' continued Darknoll, turning suddenly towards Malyn.

'Who? I? No,' laughed the cynical doctor; 'I've prepared too many skeletons for that. Jeremy Taylor, a very clever personage, who—'

'I have read his works,' quietly interrupted the old man.

'That worthy divine compares a skeleton to a case of bones, from which the winged soul long since has flown. Now, nothing will persuade me, as a man of science and some experience, that that soul is likely to re-habituate itself from the musty contents of an old wardrobe or clothes-press, full of motes and fleas—not to mention worse insects—ha! ha! This was in a parenthesis. I wonder whether they are ghostly, too?—to go wandering up and down moonlit corridors, and—highly aristocratic people all their lives—as cold as icicles, and as proud as the devil—to go frightening some unfortunate housemaid out of her wits, by bursting out of a cupboard where the ghost, mind you, has no right to be, and consulting an ignorant man concerning a secret in which she can take no possible interest.'</